

Maria Stapleton

Encountering Tourism in Alotau, Papua New Guinea

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The value placed on social relations in Alotau has implications within this study, indeed I would argue that kinship, as I understand it, is completely central to this work because it impacted what people told me. Who I was to the person I was speaking to influenced the knowledge I gained from them. Moreover, my understanding this nature of the relationship, and the various aspects that influenced it, improved the feeling of trust and understanding...

...It is important to note is that underlying these kinship elements were past and future exchanges. For me they would think about what I had done and given to people as well as what my parents had done and given, and future exchanges focused predominantly on the skills or experiences I had that they could use. There was a sense of give and take to every interaction, and previous interactions influenced others. My position as an anthropologist had less influence on these encounters because for others it was a new way of seeing me that was not, at least not yet, as important as the other identities they assigned to me. Sometimes knowledge would be offered to me as if I was a tourist, when specific numbers or facts would be stated, and other times the knowledge was more personal, for example when there was conflict with a specific person. It wasn't necessarily hard on people to try to identify where I fitted in their schema, as not only are there new ways for people to be re-seen happening all the time but usually it is all unconsciously done.



Dancers from the islands also participated and travelled many miles by boat to get to Alotau to perform for the tourists. This was taken on the second day of the Kenu and Kundu Festival, when the first cruise ship arrived in 2013.



The Yalonai village guide Aunty and her daughter, both wearing the traditional grass skirt. The aunty is adorning an impressive bagi necklace also. Tourists are told they are allowed to take pictures of them, but the tourists usually ask the kids and then show them what it looks like afterwards.



The roof of the traditional house. Painted on it is crab design called “pupula” and is only drawn on special houses. The house is a prawn building as the roof is specially designed to not be straight.



The first demonstration is about betelnut (*photo courtesy of Benedict Jainona*)